

Message Text

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62

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FM AMCONSUL MONTREAL

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 6323

INFO AMEMBASSY OTTAWA

AMCONSUL QUEBEC

UNCLAS MONTREAL 0882

E.O. 11652; N/A

TAGS; ELAB PINT CA

SUBJECT; QUEBEC GENERAL WALKOUT; A SUCCESS OR A FLOP?

REF; MONTREAL 870 OF 5/20/75 AND PREVIOUS

1. THE EFFECTIVENESS OF A STRIKE CALL LIKE BEAUTY LIES IN THE EYE OF THE BEHOLDER. LOUIS LABERGE, PRESIDENT OF THE QFL HAILED "THE 120,000-STRONG" GENERAL WALKOUT OF MAY 21 AS A "MOST SEVERE WARNING TO THE QUEBEC GOVERNMENT." POLICE REPORTS, ON THE OTHER HAND, INDICATE THAT ONLY ABOUT 14,000 PARTICIPATED IN THE WALKOUT IN THE MONTREAL AREA AND OUTLYING RETURNS DO NOT REPEAT NOT SUGGEST THE DIFFERENCE COULD HAVE BEEN MADE UP IN THOSE AREAS. (AMCONGEN QUEBEC CITY REPORTED EVERYONE APPEARED TO BE WORKING THERE.) QUEBEC PREMIER ROBERT BOURASSA ASKED "HOW CAN YOU CALL IT A GENERAL STRIKE WHEN ONLY THREE OR FOUR PERCENT OF THE POPULATION IS ON STRIKE?" THE PRINCIPAL NOTICEABLE SHUTDOWN IN MONTREAL WAS IN THE POST OFFICE, WHERE INSIDE WORKERS WALKED OFF FOR 24 HOURS, BUT POSTAL STRIKES ARE SO ENDEMIC HERE THAT THIS COULD HAVE OCCURRED WITH NO INCENTIVE WHATEVER.

2. EVEN LABERGE'S FIGURES, IF RIGHT, SUPPORT THE PREMIER'S VIEW THAT "THE IMMENSE MAJORITY OF QUEBEC WORKERS CONSIDER

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IT (THE GENERAL STRIKE) USELESS AND REALIZE IT COSTS THEM

A LOT." TO THE EXTENT THAT SOME MEMBERS OF OTHER LABOR ORGANIZATIONS JOINED WITH THE QFL STRIKERS, PARTICIPATION BY QFL MEMBERSHIP DROPPED PROPORTIONATELY; I.E., JUST OVER ONE-THIRD, BY HIS OWN COUNT, AND, BY POLICE COUNT, JUST UNDER THREE PERCENT OF THE QFL SUPPORTED THEIR LEADER IN THIS PROPOSED SHOW OF FORCE. ITS SUCCESS OR FAILURE WILL UNDOUBTEDLY BE A BONE OF CONTENTION FOR SOME TIME TO COME.
HARPER

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